

RCN SURGEON COMMUNICATION xx/xx

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENT FOR DIVE TRAINING

Ver 1 – 1 Jun 23

References:

- A. UMG 200-01 Diving Fitness After Respiratory Illness
- B. DFHP Advisory 6643-12 Core Health Protection Recommendations
- C. 4000-04 Diver Periodic Health Assessment
- D. DFHP Advisory 6636-81 COVID-19 Vaccination in the CAF
- E. Updated RCN Vaccination Directive (27 Apr 2023)

BACKGROUND

1. Force Health Protection measures against COVID-19 are currently being relaxed across the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Canadian public. As Fleet Diving Unit Atlantic (FDU(A)) and Fleet Diving Unit Pacific (FDU(P)) are entering the peak of the 2023 dive training season with multiple courses in house, a reassessment of the COVID-19 Health Protection measures employed during training is required to protect both the individual health of trainees and CAF Force Generation.
2. While measures such as widespread testing, social distancing and mask wearing are no longer being enforced at most Canadian Forces Bases and Training Facilities, immunization remains an effective method of reducing the spread and severity of symptoms from COVID-19. While most members attending dive training are likely to only develop mild symptoms with a COVID-19 infection, any upper respiratory illness symptoms may result in an individual being unfit to dive for several days (Ref A), jeopardizing their own training as well as their course mates'.

DIRECTION

3. Per Reference B, the COVID-19 vaccine is now part of the recommended routine immunizations for CAF members. Up to date routine immunizations is a screening criteria prior to attending dive training at either FDU's (Ref C).
4. Per Ref B, up to date COVID vaccination is defined as a baseline COVID vaccination series. CJOC currently considers COVID vaccination to be up to date if a bivalent booster has been received after 1 Sep 2022, while the RCN has ceased the vaccination requirements on ship but maintains the need to meet mission specific requirements (Ref E).

5. As such, a consensus was reached between the Consultants in Diving Medicine and Commanding Officers of both FDU's mandating only the initial COVID-19 immunization series prior to attending initial dive training.
6. As a result, while members who do not meet the basic CAF routine immunizations requirements may not be "Unfit Dive", they will be considered "Unfit to attend dive training" at this time. This measure may be reviewed in the future based on local prevalence of COVID-19 as well as Public Health recommendations on COVID-19 immunizations.

QUESTIONS

7. Any questions or clarification on this policy can be discussed with regional Consultants in Diving and Submarine Medicine, LCdr Isabelle Vallee (Atlantic), LCdr Kaighley Brett (Central) and LCdr Ian Kirby (Western/Pacific).